

Environmental Tips: A Homeowner Guide

Did you know that fertilizers and pesticides can harm the environment when used or disposed of incorrectly?

Here are some simple tips - dos and don'ts - that will help you be environmentally friendly. When practicing these tips, you are using integrated pest management (IPM).

Do...

- *test your soil before applying fertilizer.* Soil tests indicate soil nutrients available and the pH in your soil.
- *use organic slow-release fertilizers.*
- *gently water-in fertilizers.* Try to reduce runoff. Do not apply fertilizers before heavy rains. Gentle rains and sprinklers are best.
- *select plants adapted to Oklahoma.* This will help eliminate plant stress and enable plants to resist pest attack. Contact your County OSU Extension office for a list.
- *choose disease resistant plants for the yard and garden.* This will reduce fungicide applications.
- *Water plants in the morning and keep moisture off leaves.* Moisture on leaves encourages fungi to grow. This practice allows leaves to dry off during the day.
- *monitor plants regularly for pests.* Pests are easier to manage when there are only a few.
- *identify pests before applying pesticides.* Environmental conditions cause some problems, and sprays may not be necessary. Leaf scorch is often mistaken as a disease problem.
- *mechanically remove pests.* This includes pulling weeds or picking caterpillars off plants. If plants are infested with aphids or spider mites, rinse them with water before spraying them. This will knock many of the pests off the plant.
- *Use pesticides that break down quickly in the environment.* Examples are insecticidal soap and pyrethrins.
- *follow label instructions.* Never use more than recommended. Do not apply more frequently than the label states.
- *sweep up excess granular pesticides and fertilizers left on walkways, driveways, and streets following an application.*
- *ask questions.* Visit your County OSU Extension office or garden center. They can provide information about plants, correctly identify pest problems, and recommend IPM techniques.

Don't...

- *overbuy*. Never buy more pesticide or fertilizer than you would use in one season.
- *over water following fertilizer or pesticide applications*. Excess water can wash fertilizer and pesticides into streets and storm drains.
- *over fertilize*. Too much fertilizer can be costly. You may be adding nutrients already in your soil. Also, some plants are more susceptible to disease if they have too much nitrogen.
- *apply pesticides when it is windy or heavy rains are expected*. This will eliminate pesticide drift to other plants and to you. Heavy rains can wash pesticides off plants and into streets or into your neighbor's yard.
- *pour pesticides down toilets, sinks, or storm drains, or in creeks*. Use up pesticides, give them to a friend or relative, or save them for a household hazardous waste collection event.
- *store pesticides in reach of children*. Pesticides should be kept in a cool, dry, ventilated, and locked cabinet.

Helpful Definitions

IPM - Integrated Pest Management (IPM is a combination of several pest management techniques, including monitoring pest populations, biological control, and chemical and non-chemical (cultural, physical, and mechanical) methods.

Pests - Organisms that cause harm to humans, destroy crops, or cause aesthetic damage. Pests include insects, disease organisms, and weeds.

Pesticides - Compounds that kill pests. Pesticides either originate from natural sources or are synthetically derived. Examples are herbicides, which kill weeds; insecticides, which control insects; and fungicides, which kill fungal organisms that cause some diseases.